

Let's Go Eco-Shopping!



Objective

To teach students how to identify and evaluate environmental attributes of products and assess their environmental impacts.



Activity Description

Research school supplies and determine which products have the most positive environmental attributes.



Materials Needed

- Five products with environmental claims on labels (such as a cereal box made with recycled content or an aluminum can with a recyclable symbol)
- Index cards or small pieces of cardboard (approximately five)
- *Product Review Worksheet* (one for each student)



Key Vocabulary Words

Postconsumer-recovered material content
Life cycle
Environmental attribute



Duration

2 hours



Skills Used

Communication
Research
Observation/classification
Problem solving



Activity

Step 1: Bring in five products with environmental claims and examine them with the class. List the attributes on the chalkboard and discuss them (refer to the Teacher Fact Sheet titled *Buying Recycled* on page 79). For example, many paper products are manufactured with environmental attributes such as those listed in the “Environmental Attributes for Paper” sidebar. Discuss product manufacturing (refer to the Teacher Fact Sheet titled *Products* on page 25) and its potential impact the environment. Discuss how changing some

Environmental Attributes for Paper

Preconsumer content
Postconsumer content
Recyclability of packaging
Recyclability of product
Reusability of item

of the practices involved in product manufacturing can increase or diminish a product's environmental impact.

Step 2: Divide students into groups of approximately five students.



language
arts



social
studies



art



Journal Activity

Have students pretend they are in charge of buying school supplies for their school. Ask them what kinds of environmental attributes they would consider when purchasing supplies.

Step 3: Assign each group one school supply product that could possess environmental attributes (e.g., binders with recovered-content plastic coating, paper clips with recovered plastic, and pencils with recovered-content wood).

Step 4: Have each student in each group visit a store individually and research his or her assigned product. Give students copies of the *Product Review Worksheet* and instruct them to answer the questions while visiting the store.

Step 5: After visiting stores, have students regroup to discuss the results. Each group should pick one brand that they think represents the most environmentally sound product. Let students have their own group discussions and then conduct a class discussion. Start the discussion by writing each group product on the chalkboard. Under each product, list the associated environmental attributes each group discovered. Discuss each attribute, concentrating on what attributes are most important and why. Have the students number the attributes in order of importance, starting with number 1 as the most important attribute.

Step 6: Have students break into their smaller groups again to revisit their choice of the most environmentally sound product. Have the students use the environmental attribute information on the board to answer the following question: Do you think the product you initially chose is still the most environmentally sound product? If not, have them review their product research again and choose the most environmentally sound product.

Step 7: If possible, purchase each of the products the groups decided are most environmentally sound. This should end up involving between five and seven products total.

Step 8: Take the new products with environmental attributes and create a display either in the classroom or elsewhere in the school. Let students get creative with display ideas (e.g., place them on a cloth, include inflatable beach-ball globes or other environmental symbols). Place an index card or small piece of poster-board next to each product explaining the environmental attributes it contains. Also create a title poster that explains the contents and purpose of your display. Each student could sign the title poster to show his or her participation in the project.



Assessment

1. Ask students to think about their shopping habits. Before today's lesson, ask them if they consider environmental attributes when purchasing products. Ask them if they will in the future. Have them list what kinds of attributes they will pay the most attention to.
2. List a few environmental attributes on the chalkboard and ask students to identify the most important and explain its importance.
3. Ask students to suggest environmental attributes to consider when purchasing some products other than those already researched (e.g., beverages, paint, food items).



Enrichment

1. Discuss product lifecycle stages: manufacturing, use, and disposal (refer to the Teacher Fact Sheet titled *Products* on page 25) with students. Assign students to select one of the products examined in this activity and draw a colorful flow chart of the steps involved in manufacturing, use, or disposal of the item.
2. Have students write and perform a 30-second advertising spot for a product with environmental attributes. If equipment is available, record each spot on videotape. Discuss how and why each advertisement was or was not effective.
3. Have students write and design a marketing brochure that emphasizes a product's environmental attributes. Instruct students to develop the brochure targeting consumers. The brochures should explain why a consumer might purchase this item over a competing company's product.
4. Pretend that students have been selected to run a new company that evaluates marketing claims on environmental attributes and rates the environmental impact of different products. Have students suggest appropriate names for the company and vote to choose one. Break students into groups of approximately five students and give each group a piece of paper and art supplies (crayons, paint, markers, etc.). Instruct them to design a symbol or logo to represent each environmental attribute their company's products possess. This symbol will be appear on product packaging to advertise the company's environmental awareness. Again, the class can vote on its favorite symbol of an environmental attribute.
5. When visiting stores, have students record the cost of products with and without environmental attributes. Have students evaluate their research and perform a cost comparison.
6. Using the actual product, have students present their product research to the class by acting out a shopping experience in a skit. Tell students to be creative in role-playing. The group does not need to be one big family on a shopping trip. They can role play anyone—a store clerk, another customer, a representative of the company that manufactures the product, even the President of the United States. Instruct students to discuss the environmental attributes of products and practice comparison shopping in the skits.

Name: _____

Product Review Worksheet

1. Are there any brands of your product that advertise environmental attribute claims? If so, how many different brands are available?

2. Which brand offers more environmental attributes?

3. What attributes do you think are the most important and which products have those attributes?

4. After reviewing all of the brands, which one would you purchase and why?

5. What are the costs of the different brands?

